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[A Society has been established in Massachusetts, by some christian philanthropists, to discourage war. Whatever opinion may be entertained of the utility of this Institution, no doubt can exist about the purity of the motives of the respectable individuals who compose it. One of the strongest arguments for war in Europe, a crowded population, cannot be found in this country for a long period of time. The following letters were received by the founder of this Society, in answer to an application to the writers for their support of its views. Any letters coming from such eminent men as Mr. Adams and Mr. Jefferson, must be interesting; but these are highly characteristic: We copy them from the 4th number of "the Friend of Peace," a work published under the auspices of this Society.]

*Mr. Jefferson's Answer.*

MONTICELLO, JAN. 29, 1816.

SIR,

Your letter, bearing date October 18, 1815, came only to hand the day before yesterday, which is mentioned to explain the date of mine. I have to thank you for the pamphlets accompanying it, to wit, the Solemn Review, the Friend of Peace or Special Interview, and the Friend of Peace, No. 2. The first of these I had received through another channel some months ago. I have not read the two last steadily through, because where one assents to propositions as soon as announced, it is loss of time to read the arguments in support of them. These numbers discuss the first branch of the causes of war, that is to say, wars undertaken for the *point of honour*, which you aptly analogize with the act of duelling between individuals, and reason with justice from the one to the other. Undoubtedly this class of wars is, in the general, what you state them to be, "needless, unjust and inhuman, as well as antichristian."

The second branch of this subject, to wit, wars undertaken on account of *wrong done*, and which may be likened to the act of robbery in private life, I presume will be treated of in your future numbers. I observe this class mentioned in the Solemn Review, p. 10, and the question asked, "Is it common for a nation to obtain a *redress* of wrongs by war?" The answer to this question you will of

course draw from history ; in the mean time, reason will answer it on grounds of probability, that where the wrong has been done by a weaker nation, the stronger one has generally been able to enforce redress ; but where by a stronger nation, redress by war has been neither obtained nor expected by the weaker ; on the contrary, the loss has been increased by the expenses of the war, in blood and treasure : yet it may have obtained another object, equally securing itself from future wrong. It may have retaliated on the aggressor, losses of blood and treasure, far beyond the value to him, of the wrong he had committed, and thus have made the advantage of that too dear a purchase to leave him in a disposition to renew the wrong in future ; in this way, the loss by the war may have secured the weaker nation from loss by future wrong. The case you state of two boxers, both of whom get a "terrible bruising," is apposite to this ; he, of the two who committed the aggression on the other, although victor in the scuffle, yet probably finds his aggression not worth the bruising it has cost him. To explain this by numbers, it is alleged, that Great-Britain took from us, before the late war, near 1000 vessels, and that during the war, we took from her 1400 ; that before the war, she seized, and made slaves of 6000 of our citizens, and that in the war we killed more than 6000 of her subjects, and caused her to expend such a sum as amounted to 4 or 5000 guineas a head for every slave she made. She might have purchased the vessels she took, for less than the value of those she lost, and have used the 6000 of her men killed, for the purposes to which she applied ours, have saved the 4 or 5000 guineas a head, and obtained a character of justice, which is valuable to a nation as to an individual. These considerations, therefore, leave her without inducement to plunder property, and take men in future on such dear terms. I neither affirm nor deny the truth of these allegations, nor is their truth material to the question ; they are possible, and therefore present a case which will claim your consideration, in a discussion of the general question ; Whether any degree of injury can render a recourse to war expedient ? Still less do I propose, to draw to myself any part in this discussion. Age, and its effects both on body and mind, has weaned my attentions from publick subjects, and left me unequal to the labours of correspondence, beyond the limits of my personal concerns. I retire therefore

from the question, with a sincere wish, that your writings may have effect in lessening this greatest of human evils, and that you may retain life and health, to enjoy the contemplation of this happy spectacle; and pray you to be assured of my great respect.

---

TH: JEFFERSON

*Mr. Adams' Answer.*

QUINCY, FEBRUARY 6, 1816.

DEAR SIR,

I have received your kind letter of the 23d of January, and I thank you for the pamphlets enclosed with it.

It is very true, as my excellent friend, Mr. Norton, has informed you, that I have read many of your publications with pleasure.

I have also read, almost all the days of my life, the solemn reasonings and pathetick declamations of Erasmus, of Fene-  
lon, of St. Pierre, and many others against war, and in favour of peace. My understanding and my heart, accorded with them, at first blush. But, alas! a longer and more extensive experience has convinced me, that wars are as necessary and as inevitable, in our system, as Hurricanes, Earthquakes and Volcanoes.

Our beloved country, sir, is surrounded by enemies, of the most dangerous, because the most powerful and most unprincipled character. Collisions of national interest, of commercial and manufacturing rivalries, are multiplying around us. Instead of discouraging a martial spirit, in my opinion, it ought to be excited. We have not enough of it to defend us by sea or land.

Universal and perpetual peace appears to me, no more nor less than everlasting passive obedience, and non-resistance. The human flock would soon be fleeced and butchered by one or a few.

I cannot therefore, sir, be a subscriber or a member of your society.

I do, sir, most humbly supplicate the theologians, the philosophers, and the politicians, to let me die in peace. I seek only repose.

With the most cordial esteem, however,

I am, sir, your friend and servant,

---

JOHN ADAMS.